

The Desired Haven

By Rev. Malcolm Macsween

Psalm 107:30 – “Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven”

The word haven in Hebrew means a place of collection, of gathering, where ships collect. Spiritually it is heaven, the gathering-place of the people of God. May we this day be exercised with respect to what the Saviour says in John about heaven, that it is the place for which all the Lord's people are being prepared. It is to be kept in their mind's eye as the place to which they are hastening.

This place is for a certain people, the Lord's people. If they are to be brought into the harbour, they must first come through the seas to reach it. And if their voyage is by sea, they must leave the land. And if they leave the land, it is because the Holy Ghost has awakened them to see their sin, their dire peril and their great need. Plainly they could not stay where they were. They were shown by the Spirit of God that their native country is appointed to certain destruction. Like Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, they were told to flee out of the City of Destruction. Hence, they 'go down to the sea in ships,' they 'do business in great waters.' (Psalm 107:23) They are drawn, driven forth, their eyes being opened to see that all else will perish, that sinners are under God's curse, and that that curse pertains to themselves. 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' (Gal 3:10) Hence, they are brought to feel that they can never satisfy God's holy law and its requirements. This is a mark upon them - let us try ourselves - this searching question fills the heart: 'How should man be just with God?' (Job 9:2) But God by His grace in effectual calling separates them to seek Himself, to take a spiritual voyage that they might come at last to the port of heaven.

There are four things to be considered in relation to the text and context: (1) They do business in great waters (v 23). (2) The storms through which this tried people must go (v 25-27). (3) They cry to the Lord in their trouble (v 28). (4) So He bringeth them unto their desired haven (v 30).

They do business in great waters

Some of you, my dear friends, can look back to those early days when you did business in great waters - searchings of heart, distress of soul, conviction of sin, fear of being lost forever. By divine grace you were brought out of the world that you might cry to God in your great peril and need. You are a blessed people, and you will be occupied to all eternity in sitting around the Master's feet and telling the wonders of His love. It is common amongst mariners to tell of their experiences on the sea, the storms they passed through and the wonders they have seen. Thus, when the Lord's people get to heaven, they will be occupied in praising and blessing God and recounting His mercies to them by the way. They have seen His works, His great works in the plan of salvation. Have we ourselves? On your way to eternity this day, have you? Have you seen how God eternally loved His people and sent His Son to die for them, to be the propitiation for their sins; how His Spirit quickens the sinner and reveals to him his needs, and reveal Christ to his soul? These are the works of the Lord. O that a way was ever opened whereby a sinner can escape the wrath to come!

Have you seen His wonders in the deep? Have you seen them in your own experience? All the religion of some is in the head, with nothing at all in the heart. God knows all things. His people see much in the deep of electing love, rich grace and sovereign mercy. This is known and felt in their hearts. But it is a solemn thing only to seem to have. 'For whomsoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not [though he seems to have], from him shall be taken away even that he hath.'

(Matt 13:12) All spiritually living characters - saved sinners - see God's wonders in the deep: His works, the wonders of redeeming love. Those who are accepted in the Beloved, God gives them, sooner or later, an earnest of heaven and the sealing of the Spirit.

O how wonderful to them! "What! O Lord, canst Thou love a sinner like me? Hast Thou put all my sins away by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? Hast Thou promised to bring me through stormy waters and lead me safe into the haven of heaven?" Who can speak of these things as they should be spoken of, these wonders of God's grace and love to poor sinners?

The storms through which this tried people must go

It is a trying experience when at times the soul mounts up to heaven, then sinks down again to the deep, and is melted. There is a touch of this literally on-board ship. When a sailor emerges from the hatchway and is thrown on the deck, he is fearful of being washed overboard and is glad to grasp whatever is within reach. But all this is nothing compared with what the Lord leads His people through in their spiritual experience. They reel and stagger like a drunken man. O the bitterness of it, the pain and sorrow! Only the Lord knows what they feel, yet they are not without hope that, through God's infinite mercy, they are bound for the desired haven. God here gives them the earnest of the Spirit, and they shall have full possession by and by. But O the storms and tempests through which the Lord's people pass: troubles, temptations, afflictions! Sometimes their hopes rise heavenwards; sometimes their fears bring them down to the depths. They are utterly helpless in their soul trouble.

There may be some poor soul here today who is melted because of trouble. All your strength is gone; you are unable to stand against these things; you are at your wit's end, reeling to and from in secret before the Lord, staggering like a drunken man. The world thinks these people strange characters, yet they are all destined to come to heaven, to be forever with the Lord. But O the bitterness of their troubles! Their soul will ask: "Lord, shall I ever come through this trouble?" Shall I ever survive these things?" The heart is so guilty and ashamed. They cry: "Lord, have pity on a poor worthless worm. O Lord, help me in my trouble. Thou who crossed the stormy waters of the Sea of Galilee and spoke peace and calm to them, enable me to feel that Thou art with me, and that I shall never make shipwreck of my faith, in spite of all I am and all that threatens me."

Now observe carefully: 'He commandeth.' We may say: "I have not been looking there. I looked at this cause and that cause. I was forgetful that it is God who commands and raises the stormy wind." All comes from the Lord. God has control of all the troubles and distresses of spiritual mariners. The proud, self-righteous, conceited Pharisee may go on in his quiet way, while the child of God encounters grievous temptations, losses, trials, disappointments, and Satan thrusting at him and saying: 'God hath forsaken him.' Surely that is a dreadful word to get in the midst of a storm. The great adversary Satan takes advantage of the deep trials of the children of God, and says: 'There is no help for you in God.' Like David (in

Psalm 3:2) when he was fleeing from Absalom, they must say: 'Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.'

They cry to the Lord in their trouble

This is also true of these spiritual mariners. Blessed be the Lord that they are ever brought to call upon His name! In their first distress they cried: 'Lord, save me, or I perish.' So now in their trouble they seek God for help. Do we do that? Do you today, on your way to eternity? Do not put it off until tomorrow or next year. Do it now! Cry: 'Lord, save me or I perish!' You ask: "Do I myself?" Not as I would, and not as I ought. How backward to pray the Lord's people find themselves, how slow to call upon the name of the Lord! How slow! How weak they think their prayers! Nevertheless, they cry to God in their troubles, many times. Sometimes matters seem impossible. Some of your own matters may seem impossible today, and certainly you cannot put them right. Also, others cannot put them right. But all power in heaven and earth lies with Christ.

'They cry.' In our folly, we may speak unkindly sometimes of the people of God; but could we see them before God in secret, groaning to Him in their trouble, our hearts would be moved for them. We would weep with them, help them with their burdens, and pray for them. 'Then they cry.' Some of you may be ready to do that now, as we are endeavouring to speak to you in our poor faltering way. "I am laying my case before the Lord," you may say, " but I am so tried about my prayers because I seem to be asking for the same thing, time and time and time again, and often in the same words." You are concerned about that and cast down about it. Well, why may you not be so? If what you have need of before God is still with you, you will ask again and again in the same or similar words.

Remember the Garden of Gethsemane where the Son of God prayed to His Father. We are told: 'And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.' (Matt 26:44)

Now the Lord in answer to this cry sent these spiritual mariners calm. 'Then are they glad because they be quiet.' He takes their mind back to this place and that place in the spiritual ocean where the Lord in answer to their spiritual cries sent a wonderful calm and quietness. Sometimes it is found in the house of God, sometimes in their own home; sometimes outside, sometimes inside. The storm is

hushed and the tempest for a while ceases. The winds no longer blow, and the Lord whispers peace to the broken heart. And the soul says: "I shall get through, for the Lord is with me. He graciously hears my prayer. O that the Lord Jesus Christ would steer me over my grief and be my Pilot in every storm!"

So He bringeth them unto their desired haven

There are at least three things wrapped up in this little word so. First, it declares to us the faithfulness of God. 'So he bringeth them.' No storms and tempests could ever thwart the purposes of a faithful God. His people are not lost by the way. God's eternal purpose of love is not, nor ever can be thwarted. No matter what

His people are called on to pass through; nothing can frustrate their coming to the desired haven.

It also expresses the manner of their voyage and entering into the haven. So, it is so, in this way, in this manner, that their voyage is to be. Not on smooth seas, but in stormy waters. 'They mount up to the heaven; they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.' So, in this manner. It is through much tribulation that the Lord's people must enter into the kingdom. If our voyage is smooth and easy and calm, let us look well to it; this is not the way. Let us bless God indeed for temporal mercies, but let us see that they do not become a snare to us, to take us off from being diligent to make our calling and election sure. Let this be the thought of our heart if our passage seems smooth and is apparently unruffled, if we are not exercised before God. Let us fear the treacherous calm more than the tempest over our head.

It is an expression of God's power. God's almighty power is put forth for the salvation of weak and helpless men. So, the haven is ever before the people of God. These precious things of the gospel shall be spoken of for ever and ever in heaven. His people's desire goes out towards that heavenly country. O to see it afar off and be given a sure persuasion that we shall reach it! 'So, he bringeth them unto their desired haven.' All the Lord's people will soon be landed on the shore of eternal happiness. There their powers will be expanded and they shall dwell forever where Jesus is. 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were

not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.' (John 14:2) Heaven is often said to be the home of the Lord's people. Heaven is their haven.

There is no better description of the Church of God than that of a ship. The ship is out at sea: the Lord's people are on their way home. The bow is towards the good haven, the land of the blessed. In this fair haven, the land of promise, there are no storms, none within and none without. There is no sin there for evermore, no pains, no losses, no crosses: but there the Lord's people are free from all the storms that ever tossed them on the sea of time. O friend, heaven is that haven from which the ship shall never make another voyage! She shall be home for good, no longer mortal, for this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption. Whatever voyages she may make on the sea of time, all will be well in the haven for ever and ever. Throughout eternity, the people of God shall sail on a sea of glass. They shall never say: "I am sick." No; that is for the sea of time. That is where sin is, and trouble is. Heaven is the desired haven to all who have run to the haven Christ with their sins in time. They may well long to be where there is no sin, no trial, no trouble, no temptation, no sorrow, but only perfect happiness. Then they shall be with Jesus where He is, and with their friends and brethren in Christ who have gone before. Friend, are you homeward bound, in the sense that you have come into the haven Christ as a lost sinner, and are now looking to be in heaven for evermore?

Most of all, heaven is their desired haven because Christ is there. O will I ever get into Christ the haven? Will I ever get into heaven? Never, except the Holy Spirit brings me there. The Lord's people need not be astonished at the storms and tempests. Let the believer who is getting grey turn up his log book (of the memory) and see how many days generally he has been in smooth waters. How many? Not many. For all the experiences and storms he has come through, he may expect more than one storm yet before he reaches the celestial shore. But for all that, 'so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.' Ah, He says: "tribulation." We may say: "Surely not." But He says: "Yes, you will have tribulation." So the Lord's people are to endeavour to be of good cheer. The Saviour also says: 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33) 'So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.'

Not every sinner is brought to Christ and to heaven. Ah, the natural man does not desire to be brought to Christ. 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' (1 Corinthians 2:14) The natural man, destitute of the Spirit of God, cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The natural man and the worldly-wise man receive nothing by faith. He will not acknowledge his need of the work of the Holy Spirit of God. He is a Pelagian at heart. The things of the Spirit are foolishness in the eyes of the natural man. They are spiritually discerned, because they are made known only by the revelation of the Spirit. Who are they who are brought to the desired haven? According to the text and context, such as cry unto the Lord in their trouble.

Now the question we must ask is: Are you yourself a crying soul, in a spiritual, gospel sense? Are you pleading for God's mercy and deliverance? You say: "I would pray with my whole heart, but I cannot get it out!" Well, feel it within your soul, for God can see your heart and hear your cry and your desire. 'He heareth the desire of the humble.' (Psalm 10:17) O see that you pray the prayer of the publican: 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' (Luke 18:13) See that you come to Christ the haven in time, and find that rest for your soul which you can never find in any other way. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' (John 6:37) They shall come, not against their will, though they were unwilling. He has a way of making them willing in the day of His power, by the power of the Spirit. Everyone who is given to Christ will come to Him; yes, even blind sinners, for He will bring the blind by a way that they knew not - even the dead spiritually, dead in trespasses and sins, for Christ quickens the soul. In the day of His power, He makes a people willing to come to Him and to be His forever.

Why does Christ tell us that all who are given Him shall come to Him? To comfort ministers and preachers who preach sin and salvation in season and out of season. Though it is a heart-breaking work preaching Christ to sinners who will not have Him, yet Christ says: 'Your labour is not in vain,' for 'all that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' If those who are first invited make excuses, others will accept the gospel invitation. If the scribes and Pharisees stand away from the haven, publicans and harlots will make for it. None are cast out who come. 'Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed

away; behold, all things are become new.' (2 Cor 5:17) If that is so when a poor sinner flees to Christ here, how much more so is it when a poor sinner arrives in the haven of glory. In the Book of Revelation, Christ gives His name of honour as a pledge for the full performance of all He has promised to His people: 'I am Alpha and Omega.' (Rev 1:8) Christ begins in time to deal with His people savingly by His Word and Spirit; so He brings them to Himself in time, then in eternity. 'So He brings them unto their desired haven.'